

STORY OF A
REMARKABLE MAN.

WHAT ROBERT BROOKINGS HAS
ACCOMPLISHED IN TWENTY YEARS.

With Samuel Cupples, He Has
Placed Washington University in
the Front Rank of Wealthy
Schools—A Life Ambition.



MR. CUPPLES.

As He Appeared at the Age of 20. (From an Old Photograph.)

the world that he had the capacity for leadership. Putting every other thought aside, he started out to find employment, and secured a minor position in the then large woodenware establishment of Samuel Cupples. After a few months in the store he was released from Mr. Cupples the offer of a position as traveling salesman, the territory being a part of Missouri, which had up to that time developed little trade. The offer was accepted. In a few months young Brookings was selling twice as many goods in his territory as had ever gone there before. At the end of his first year there was more business than one man could look after, and he had an assistant. At the end of the second year his territory was doubled and he was complimented with a corps of assistants. One day toward the close of the following year he walked into the store unexpectedly and asked to see Mr. Cupples. The head of the house was surprised at the visit and asked what it signified. "Just this," said Brookings, "I have worked up a trade in my territory which will justify my going into business for myself. I thought possibly you might wish to make me a proposition before I decide to do so."

The First
Ambition Realized.

As junior member of the firm he had opportunity for developing ideas that had come to him while on the road, and, being acquainted with each side of the work, was enabled to extend the field of operations in many directions. Every detail of the business was at his finger tips, and he was constantly suggesting new ways of doing things. At that time the development of the West was practically in its infancy. New railroads were being built in all directions, and each of them opened a new field for buying or selling, or both. The development of the business was more than ample with that of the country. Retail houses in various parts of the field were bought out, or went to the wall in their effort to keep up with the pace set by the St. Louis house. Obstacles of transportation were overcome and a way was found to every market where woodenware was in demand. Somehow or other the St. Louis house was able to undersell competitors in every part of the field. Money poured into its coffers from all directions, and new branches were added to the business to meet every demand of the times. When he had outdistanced competition Mr. Brookings began to look about for other fields in which his surplus of energy might be used to advantage. He had already accomplished his first ambition and was possessed of a fortune which assured independence for the remainder of his days.

Concentrating
Business.

His next ambition was to establish in St. Louis an industrial institution of gigantic proportions, different from anything else in the world. Out of this idea he evolved plans for building the double block of wholesale houses known the country over as Cupples Station. At that time the wholesale trade of the city was confined to the river front, First, Second and Third streets. All incoming and outgoing freight had to be hauled to and from the trains, and the expense of drayage was enormous. In addition to this there was always some delay in filling orders, and in heavy seasons this became a serious matter. Several men had sought to remedy the

recognized evils by the establishment of warehouses along the railroad tracks, but the ventures had proven unprofitable. So, when Mr. Brookings began the development of his plans he was greeted with a chorus of advice to let it alone. However this may be, the work proceeded, and in the spring of 1889 the first section of the building center of wholesale St. Louis was ready for occupancy. Then came the task of inducing the merchants to break away from old time, and move into the quarters prepared for them. Mr. Brookings called on them personally, and, with figures that he had prepared, showed them that by moving into the modern structure they would save enough freight and drayage charges to pay the rent of their quarters. When he convinced them that his figures were correct, there was a rush toward Seventh and Spruce, and Cupples Station has since been a hub of trade. From the day the first brick was laid up to the present time Mr. Brookings has given his personal attention to perfecting the appointments of his industrial community, and the property is recognized as the most complete, convenient and profitable in its class in the United States. Although its estimated value is \$3,000,000, it is altogether probable that should the directors of the university ever wish to sell it, they could realize at least 25 per cent more than that amount.

As a Library
Director.

While he was building Cupples Station Mr. Brookings was elected a director of the Mercantile Library. The library was in a bad way financially. Mr. Brookings, who he had not taken the time to read many books after his self-sufficiency, was an ardent believer in the benefits to be derived from them, and set himself to work to devise ways and means of putting the institution on its feet again. After looking the matter over thoroughly, he conceived the idea of securing a big retail store, and utilizing the upper floors for the library. He showed his plans with his own hand, and convinced them to the Board of Directors. The board approved, and Mr. Brookings was appointed to prosecute the work. Then he called on Mr. Richard M. Scruggs, president of the Scruggs, Vancouver & Company, and submitted the plans for his consideration. The result was that the dry goods company signed a long-term lease.

In recognition of his services he was elected president of the association, and in that capacity continued to develop and extend the circle of influence of the library until increasing outside demands on his time forced him to resign. When he had seen the successful issue of the Cupples Station plans, and had re-established the library, Mr. Brookings consented to accept a position on the Board of Directors of Washington University.

This was in 1890. He probably did not dream at that time that he was entering upon work which was to become the absorbing interest of his life, and to which he was destined to lend the full power of his mature ability.

It being impossible for him to occupy a "double post" in any gathering, he was forced to the front as a director of the university, and whatever matters of business were up for consideration he was looked to for advice. By degrees he became absorbed in the work of the institution, and mastered all the details of its financial foundation. There were certain things that he thought might be improved, and he made suggestions, which were carried out with profit.

In November, 1896, he was chosen president of the Board of Trustees of the university, and from that time dates the realisation of the city's foremost institution of learning. Without unnecessary delay he began to put into practice ideas which had come of the thought he had de-



MR. ROBERT BROOKINGS.

President of the Board of Trustees of Washington University. Engraved from a Sketch Made by John Wiltou Cunningham for the Sunday Republic.

Robert S. Brookings was born in Cecil County, Maryland, January 22, 1850. He came of a prominent colonial family and had exceptional educational advantages up to his seventeenth year. At that age he was thrown on his own resources. He came to St. Louis at the age of 22 and almost immediately found employment in the business of which he has been exclusive head for the past decade. Men who know him intimately say that his most pronounced characteristic is his unlimited capacity for hard work, and the mastery of the minutest details of every-

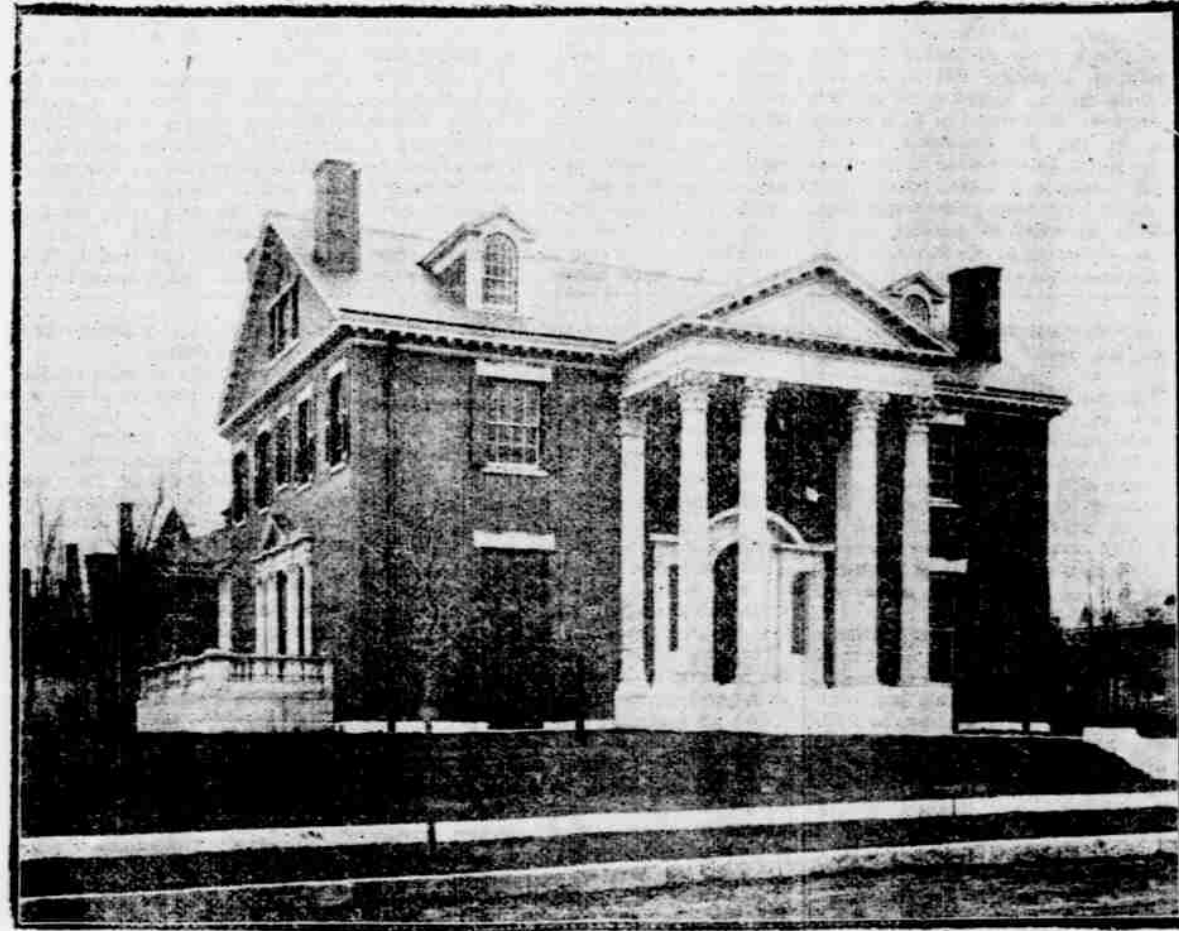
thing to which he gives his attention. Of an essentially nervous temperament, he has always had his nerves at his command, which probably accounts for his tremendous energy. Nothing is ever permitted to come between him and the business he has in hand. For this reason he has never been a good "mixer," and has never cared for society. Although a club man, and a level-headed entertainer, he is abominable in his habits, and prefers serious discussion to small talk. He is as modest as he is generous, and modesty of any kind is painful to him. This makes him one of the hardest men to reach, and even when he consents to be interviewed, which is seldom, he only says what he wants to. There's no use in trying to "pump" him.

Although raised in the strict school of business, and practical to a degree, he is an idealist of the purest type. Although a bachelor, he is decidedly domestic in his tastes, and has built several handsome residences, which have always been beautifully appointed. He loves music, and is a good critic, though a kindly one. When he decided his interest in Cupples Station to the university he gave up a salary of \$5,000 a year, but will continue to manage the immense business without compensation.

Written for the Sunday Republic. For almost half a century Samuel Cupples has been a stalwart figure in the business community of St. Louis. For half of that time his name has been known wherever woodenware in any of its forms is used. Men who have known him since he came to the city in 1861 and men who have grown gray in his employ unite in declaring him an honest man, a far-sighted merchant and a kindly gentleman. During the whole of his successful career he has attended strictly to his own business, mingling little with men in other walks of life, but always ready to perform a public duty, or to do an unostentatious kindness. He was always an active church member, and in one of two political campaigns evidenced an earnest interest in public matters. Mr. Cupples was born in Harrisburg, Pa., September 28, 1820. His parents were natives of Ireland and members of good old families. At the age of 15 he went to Cincinnati and spent the next five years in the woodenware store of A. O. Taylor. At the end of his apprenticeship his employer sent him here and furnished the capital for the first firm of Samuel Cupples & Co. Five years later Mr. Cupples bought out his partner's interest in the business. Then came the wonderful development of the business, and with it the rapid growth of his wealth. His strict attention to his affairs, and the exercise of sound judgment in several instances, Mr. Cupples has been in the lead of all competitors. As yet, and it is claimed that his company does fully 25 per cent of the woodenware business of the United States, and is by far the largest establishment of its kind in the world. Aside from his business, Mr. Cupples has shown more interest in the development of the public school system of the city than anything else, and was for many years a leading member of the Board of Education. He has also been deeply interested in the development of the Manual Training School, and a liberal contributor to its support. Mr. Cupples has been twice married and the father of three children, none of whom survive. His family is composed of three adopted daughters. His residence, at number 302 West Pine boulevard, is one of the handiwork in the city.

MR. SAMUEL CUPPLES, PHILANTHROPIST.

Written for the Sunday Republic. When men do things for the public, without thought of remuneration, they become of interest to their fellows. When they do extraordinary things, they become of exceptional interest. Samuel Cupples and Robert S. Brookings have been known to St. Louis for years as men out of the ordinary. When, on Tuesday last, they gave, without restriction or reserve, \$2,000,000 worth of richly productive real estate to Washington University, public interest became crystallized, and not only their fellow citizens, but the reading and thinking men of the country began to take personal interest in them—to feel, as it were, a general partnership in their philanthropy—to ask questions about them—to speculate as to the motives which prompted such princely generosity. More of this interest, perhaps, attaches to Mr. Brookings because of his comparative youth, because of his recent development into one of the most remarkable of Americans, because his hands and his brains are unexcelled at work, managing and developing both of the institutions involved in this most remarkable transaction. It was his brain that conceived and his hands that worked out the plan whereby, for the first time in history, practical, every-day business has become the bridge-groom of education. On him devolved the undivided responsibility of putting these plans into execution, of proving to the



Mr. Brookings's New Home at Forest Park Terrace, Completed Within the Year

to his new work, and a general, though gradual, readjustment of many of the workings of the institution was the result. A little more than a year ago he succeeded in merging two of the leading medical colleges of the city into the medical department of the university, and the law school was also strengthened. Next he raised an endowment fund of half a million dollars and submitted plans for new buildings for the entire school on a magnificent tract of land west of Forest Park. It was thought that he contributed a large share of this fund, but the subscription list was never made public. Then came the donation of Cupples Station, and his personal gift of a million and a half. Just what use will be made of this rich endowment is not known. The published statement that plans for its expenditure have not been made is not quite correct. The truth is that Mr. Brookings has his plans laid out for several years in advance, and knows just what he is going to do, but he has not thought it expedient to make these plans public, and until he gets ready to do that no outsiders will know.

Always Busily
Occupied.

It is impossible for Mr. Brookings to get away from business. No matter where he may be, or under what circumstances, no matter how hard he may try to forget his work, his every faculty is always on the alert, and he picks up ideas in the most improbable ways. Several years ago he went to Alaska on pleasure bent. He wanted to get as far as possible from work, to divert his mind of all business cares, and succeeded admirably on the outgoing trip. But at the first port in the auriferous territory he ran across a problem which kept him guessing until he got home, and occupied a good deal of his time for the next month or so. Passing one of the stores of the town he spied a box of common wooden clothes pins, the largest manufacturer of these domestic implements in the country, he stopped to take a second look, and then he got busy. The clothes pins were of his manufacture.

of that he was sure, but they bore the trade mark of another St. Louis house. He began to wonder how the other house could buy his goods, ship them thousands of miles and capture trade. Further investigation developed the fact that the other house was selling all the clothes pins used in Alaska, and was getting fancy prices for them, too.

How they managed to do it was the question that came to him day and night during the remainder of the trip. It is for the most part on a high hill, overlooking Forest Park and with a brilliant horizon of city buildings to the east and northeast. To the north there is a fringe of forest trees, rising from the dells in the bed of which is the track of the Colorado Railroad; beyond this fringe there is an expanse of rolling farm land, scantily dotted with cottages,

Where the
New University
Will Be.

The new site of the Washington University is one of the most commanding in the neighborhood of St. Louis. It is for the most part on a high hill, overlooking Forest Park and with a brilliant horizon of city buildings to the east and northeast. To the north there is a fringe of forest trees, rising from the dells in the bed of which is the track of the Colorado Railroad; beyond this fringe there is an expanse of rolling farm land, scantily dotted with cottages,